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AUTHOR Walter, Franklin B.
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ABSTRACT

The concept of accountability, or fixing responsibility for outcomes in education, is not new. As far back as 1912, administrators were responding enthusiastically to the idea of assessing teacher performance by objective criteria. Currently, the focus of the accountability movement is on evaluation. An evaluation procedure that would assist in the teaching-learning process as well as produce some measure of a teacher's effectiveness must include a clear definition of responsibilities, specific objectives, and assessment of results by these objectives. An evaluation system should be compatible with the mutual job expectations of both administrators and teachers. The individual being evaluated and the evaluator(s) should agree on performance objectives, work for their accomplishment, and jointly assess the results. Prevailing negative attitudes concerning education and, particularly, the effectiveness of our educational system have prompted education accountability and evaluation mandates. These legislative actions are attempts to mandate quality, and their success depends on the willingness of the educational community to monitor itself and to attempt to improve the quality of the teaching-learning situation. (PB)

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MANDATES FOR EVALUATION: THE NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Dr. Franklin B. Walter
Deputy Superintendent
Ohio Department of Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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At the beginning of the decade of the '70's, a familiar word took on new meaning in the professional educator's lexicon. Accountability became a rallying cry to which legislators and boards of education scurried. State after state enacted legislation relative to educational accountability. More precisely, evaluation became the focus of the accountability movement; some 16 states have enacted statutes related to evaluation.

Controversy surrounded the debate regarding merit pay for teachers 20 years ago, and even then, the rhetoric sounded familiar. Going back further, to 1912, the National Council of Education, which was a part of NEA, formed a committee chaired by George Strayer on Standards of Tests for Measuring the Effectiveness of Schools or School Systems. Influenced by the Scientific Management Movement of Frederick W. Taylor, administrators responded enthusiastically to the idea of assessing teacher performance by objective criteria. Krasno reports, however, that teacher leadership in the NEA stopped the movement by adopting a resolution in 1915 which opposed "those ratings and records which unnecessarily disturb the teacher's peace and make the rendering of best service impossible."

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Sixty years later, there is a familiar ring to the rhetoric of our day regarding the concept of accountability or fixing responsibility for outcomes in education.

The stage is set and the taxpaying public seems to be of the opinion that accountability relates pretty directly to student achievement with little or no regard to student ability. In the eyes of the schools' constituency, there is a strong relationship between accountability and evaluation.

A recent Gallup Poll found that 67 percent of American citizens favored a system that would hold teachers and administrators more accountable for student progress, and 58 percent of the respondents agreed that teachers should be paid "on the basis of the quality of their work rather than a standard scale basis." Citizens were asked in 1971, "Would you like to see the students in the local schools be given national tests so that their educational achievement could be compared with students in other communities?" Seventy percent said yes; 21 percent said no; and nine percent had no opinion.

Teachers have long known that testing students and comparing achievement scores from one community to another do not result in improved education. The task of the education community is to give leadership to the current accountability movement so that positive outcomes accrue for those who attend the nation's classrooms. Educators generally support the concept that evaluation designed to improve the teaching-learning process holds potential for improving instruction and performance.

EVALUATION

In fact, evaluation is inherent in any responsible approach to the improvement of instruction. It is difficult to conceive of an evaluation procedure that would assist in the teaching-learning process and produce some measure of a teacher's effectiveness that did not include three factors: a clear

definition of responsibilities, specific objectives, and assessment of results by these objectives. These are the essence of the performance evaluation to be discussed here.

EXPECTATION

The vast majority of professionals hold in their mind's eye a set of expectations about their jobs that they have developed over the years. Moreover, each board of education member and each school administrator has developed a set of expectations with regard to what the teacher's job should encompass. Let us call these sets of mutual expectations a "psychological contract."

These psychological contracts, on the part of administrators and board members, would include such components as an honest day's work, loyalty, reasonable conformity, job effectiveness, and initiative. For the staff's part, adequate salary, personal development, recognition and approval, fair treatment, and meaningful work would figure in the contract.

To the extent that the terms of one's employment are compatible with the psychological contract, one tends to be productive and have high morale. Vice versa, to the extent that the employee meets the expectations which make up the employer's side of the psychological contract, the employer tends to be pleased.

An evaluation system should be compatible with the dimensions of the psychological contract. But a sound program of performance evaluation encompasses certain additional vital components. The individual being evaluated should clearly understand the job expectations. Performance objectives which will serve as the bases for the evaluation should be mutually established. Evaluative judgments should be based upon evidence of accomplishment and indication of unfulfilled objectives.

Evaluation procedures should be logically conceived and formulated.

Dr. George Redfern, a national authority on evaluation of professional staff members, has stated it thus: "Evaluators should be insightful motivators of improved performance--not 'educational umpires' calling balls and strikes after performance has been accomplished. The individual being evaluated, as well as the person or persons responsible for the evaluation, should agree upon performance objectives, work for their accomplishment, and jointly assess the results. Assessment decisions should be based upon monitored data and information rather than solely upon opinions and judgments of the evaluator."

INDICATORS OF INADEQUATE EVALUATIVE PROCESSES

In addition to these positive statements of what evaluative processes should comprise, perhaps it would be helpful to state in understandable terms what evaluations should not be.

Performance objectives should not be stated in vague general terms, nor should such indicators be incapable of being clearly understood by both the evaluator and the evaluatee.

Evaluative judgments should not be based on guesswork or imprecise information. Assessments heavily weighted with unsupported opinion and evaluator bias defeat the very purposes of evaluation.

Unilateral rating procedures poorly conceived and casually administered often do more harm than good. Rarely do they motivate improvement. More often, they deter.

The performance rating heavily weighted with assessment of personal traits and quality may perhaps measure but does little to motivate performance.

Evaluation usually is not one of the top priorities of administrators and supervisors. Low priority reduces the effectiveness of evaluation and can make it an exercise in futility.

LEGISLATIVE MANDATES

Legislative mandates for evaluation reflect the tenor of the times. One need only look about to observe the many forms of unrest that now beset our society. The educator serves a resistive public that is negative about most of our institutions, about education, and particularly about the effectiveness of our educational system. These attitudes, sensed by legislators throughout the country, have prompted the educational accountability and evaluation mandates. The very survival of our institutions depends upon how well those responsible for educational management can come to grips with the confidence gap so very much in evidence today.

The mandates appear to have some similarities. The mandate now under consideration by the 111th General Assembly of Ohio has been chosen for review here because it is rather typical of others now under consideration or already enacted.

It calls for evaluation procedures, criteria of competence, and a staff development program to be mutually determined and agreed to by the employing board of education and the appropriate organization representing the teachers, principals, and assistant principals to be evaluated.

Procedures include the establishment of criteria of expected job performances, techniques and guidelines for the evaluation of competence, training of evaluators, and evaluation based on a variety and quantity of evaluation techniques including self evaluation, classroom observation, job targets, and video taping.

The mandate further provides for evaluation of the evaluators, a mechanism for resolving any possible disagreement, a schedule for an evaluation, and inclusion of specific and detailed recommendations.

In accordance with the proposed mandate, each individual whose work

is judged unsatisfactory shall be notified in writing and shall be given written recommendations for improvement and assistance. All evaluations shall be made in writing. A full record of recommendations shall be kept and the assistance provided shall be recorded and maintained in the personnel file. The individual shall be permitted to place documents, responses, and other written material in the personnel file. The board of education may not terminate a contract unless the individual has been offered assistance and has had reasonable time to correct the specified deficiencies.

These legislative actions are attempts to mandate quality. Their success depends upon the willingness of the educational community to monitor itself and to attempt to improve the quality of the teaching-learning situation.

Historically, the education profession has responded to attempts to mandate evaluation. The National Education Association's Continuing Resolution on Evaluation and Subjective Ratings states:[1]

"It is a major responsibility of educators to participate in the evaluation of the quality of their services. To enable educators to meet this responsibility more effectively, the Association calls for continued research and experimentation to develop means of objective evaluation of the performance of all educators, including identification of (a) factors that determine professional competence; (b) factors that determine the effectiveness of competent professionals; (c) methods of evaluating effective professional service; and (d) methods of recognizing effective professional service through self-realization, personal status, and salary.

"The Association also believes that evaluations should be conducted

[1] INFORMATION on Instruction and Professional Development from the National Education Association, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20036; February, 1974.

for the purpose of improvement of performance and quality of instruction offered to pupils, based upon written criteria and following procedures mutually developed by and acceptable to the teacher association, the administration and the governing board."

IN CONCLUSION

A successful evaluation program is dependent upon the following conditions:

1. The purpose and process of evaluation must be clearly understood.
2. The prime purpose of evaluation is to improve the teaching-learning situation.
3. The school system, through appropriate personnel, assumes responsibility for providing assistance to those evaluated.
4. Communication between the evaluator and the person evaluated is adequate. Evaluation is a constructive process in which both parties clearly understand their reciprocal role expectations.

It is clear that we are in the midst of a national movement toward mandated evaluation of professional personnel. Placed in its historic and sociological setting, this movement is part of the larger picture of response to the widespread disenchantment with public institutions. Mandated evaluation relates directly to the taxpaying public's demand to see tangible returns on its educational investment.

The general public has a right to expect sound evaluative procedures that hold promise for improving the teaching-learning situation. The challenge before the educational community is to develop and implement these procedures and thus to assure the taxpaying public that those who staff our schools are competent to function in the educational arena. In so doing, educators will find that they are architects, also, of a bridge to close the current confidence gap.

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